

STATE OF MICHIGAN

Family
Independence
Agency

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New legal effort to end domestic violence

Lieut. Governor signs new package of domestic violence laws that include dating relationships, personal protection orders

Substituting for Governor John Engler, who was out of state for the holidays, Lt. Governor Dick Posthumus signed into law a 24-bill domestic violence package Dec. 27.

Posthumus championed efforts to help stop domestic violence and protect survivors as chair of the Michigan Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Task Force. In that role he made it a priority to see the legislation passed within the year.

"Every day, thousands of Michigan women are abused and live in fear," Posthumus said. "These bills are a bipartisan effort to help protect women in relationships and send a message to abusers that what they are doing is not only wrong, but also a crime," Posthumus said.

The multi-bill package helps increase the safety of victims of domestic violence and:

- Protects women in dating relationships.
- Honors personal protection orders (PPO) issued by other states.
- Calls for written explanation for denial or approval of PPOs involving non-relationship stalking cases.
- Allows courts to consider out-of-state domestic assault convictions in determining sentencing.
- Requires the PPO be served to an individual before the state police send a notice concerning restricted firearm privileges.
- Authorizes the creation of state and local fatality review teams to examine homicides resulting from domestic violence.

Other bills in the package create uniform standards for tracking domestic violence crimes—by calling on the Michigan State Police to develop a standard report form for domestic violence crimes—tracking violators of PPOs through fingerprinting and increased reporting for those convicted of criminal contempt.

Many report recommendations were assigned specifically to **Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board**, an independent agency of government located in the FIA. Examples include oversight of fatality review teams, developing a statewide awareness campaign on domestic violence, and developing model prevention curricula for children and youth.

"Michigan continues to be a national leader in addressing domestic violence," said Debi Cain, executive director of the Domestic Violence Board. "We cannot rest, however, until every Michigan home is free of domestic violence.

"This legislation is another step in Michigan's efforts to eliminate domestic violence."

Both Domestic Violence Board chairperson James Fink and FIA director Douglas Howard were members of the task force chaired by Posthumus, who said the legislation was the first step toward ending domestic violence homicides in Michigan.

"We've issued recommendations to the courts and to our domestic violence service providers," he said. "Many recommendations are complex and involve the participation and cooperation of several agencies.

"But beyond recommendations, we must work to stop abuse before it starts, and continue to educate our children, as well as adults, that there is no excuse for abuse."

Intercepted letters

Date: Dec. 13
To: Doug Howard
Subj: Consumer Guide to Michigan Nursing Homes

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and your FIA staff to introduce you to the Consumer Guide to Michigan Nursing Homes. I have, as promised, delivered 300-plus copies to Jim Nye for distribution to his field staff. In return you agree to have an article about the guide included in FIA Icon. I look forward to working with you and your staff in the future.

Reg Carter

Health Care Association of Michigan, Lansing

■ An item announcing the guide was published in the November-December 2001 issue.

• • •

Date: Nov. 16
To: Grand Traverse County FIA, Traverse City
Subj: My case

My name is Dena Weatherholt and I recently was in the FIA office to apply for assistance. I know that you probably get nasty letters from people who feel they were mistreated or something, but this is a positive one.

On Sept. 11, I had an appointment with Roberta Church to bring in all my paper work showing my income and monthly bills. She was very helpful and made me feel very comfortable. I have to say that I have felt very bummed, upset and many other emotions as I am going through a divorce. Just wanted you to know that Ms. Church was the type of person I needed to talk to that day and I am thankful she was assigned to my case.

I also wanted to make you aware of two other employees who treated me with respect in my dealing with your office. The first person I had contact with was the gal at the front desk who gave me the application packet. She was very helpful in answering questions I had.

And finally, Marge Wolf who set me up in the first place with Ms. Church. She was friendly and helped me get an appointment that wouldn't interfere with my work schedule. Thank you for making the situation I'm going through a little easier to handle.

Deana Weatherholt
Traverse City

■ Roberta Church is a family independence specialist and Marge Wolf is a registration support specialist. The "gal at the front desk" was receptionist Althea Olds. Church has since transferred to Genesee County.



FIA Icon

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Family Independence Agency*

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From the Director

By Douglas E. Howard

Director, Family Independence Agency



Increasing food bank use & welfare

If you read a newspaper regularly, you have probably read about increased demand for food bank services. If you read that, you may also have read some people and organizations connect increasing food bank need to welfare reform.

Is there a connection? No one knows for certain because there has been limited research on the subject. Many people and organizations have expressed opinions. They range from welfare reform being the cause of increased need at food banks...to food bank use increasing because it is now about the only free service left and people gravitate most readily to free services...to record donations at and better outreach by food banks being the reason.

Some critics say food bank usage is up because Food Assistance Program (formerly food stamps) use is down. That is not true. Food Assistance Program cases in November 2001—totaling 310,640—were at the highest level since May 1998. Because of the slowing economy and outreach by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, FIA offices and local agencies, we have seen a 17.7 percent increase in Food Assistance cases in the 12 months since November 2000.

We asked Family Independence Program customers about their needs over the past few years. A 2001 internal survey of more than 24,000 FIP customers showed many have needs not met through their FIP grant and Food Assistance benefits, but food did not register highest among those needs. In the survey, the nearly 8,000 respondents who said they had unmet needs cited these as the most important: utilities, shelter-rent deposit, transportation, furniture or appliances, Medicaid or related health issues, clothing or personal needs for themselves or children, home repair or weatherization. Food came in as the eighth most important need and was cited by only 4.1 percent of these respondents. More than 20 percent said their most important need was utilities and nearly as many said rent was their most important need.

None of this is not to say food is unimportant, because another finding indicates food is an issue to many families. Even though only four percent mentioned food as their most important need not met by FIA, when asked specifically whether they received outside help with food in last 6 months, 19 percent of the 24,000 customers said they did go elsewhere for food. Almost 40 percent said the reason for this was inadequate Food Assistance benefits. FIP customers who cited food as a need reported they received help with food about 90 percent of the time. Overall, they reported receiving help with their most important unmet needs about 40 percent of the time.

Because of this, it could be inferred that the “most important” needs not met by FIA assistance are those less likely to be met by other agencies. Does this tell us something definitive about food bank use? Probably not, but it does indicate that—at least for FIP customers—food bank services tend not to be among their greatest unmet needs, even though many use them. Stated another way, food may be the greatest “met” need not wholly provided by the FIA.

Food banks play a very important role in our society and they rely on the support of individuals and other organizations. At the same time, because of their ready availability and visibility, the “who” and “why” questions about food banks tend to be recurring themes in news stories. I am compelled to remind you that, under welfare reform, persons who move into employment have more available resources than they ever would have under the old AFDC program. Working together, we must ensure that our customers receive the services they qualify for and the best customer service we can offer. That is our best possible response to stories like these.

Wayne County achiever Jacqueline Jones

FIA Hamtramck District & Work First partner with her for success

By Gene Hashley, Communications Director

Wayne County Family Independence Agency, Detroit

Telephone (313) 256-1560

HAMTRAMCK—Jacqueline Jones is determined to be independent from public assistance and this determination earned her the Family Independence Agency's 96th statewide Achiever of the Month award.

Jacqueline was feted for her achievements during a Nov. 16 ceremony hosted by the Wayne County FIA Hamtramck District office. FIA director Douglas E. Howard presented the award.

"Because of her accomplishments, her strong will to succeed, and her desire to free herself and her family from reliance on public assistance, it is with great pleasure that I present Jacqueline Jones with the November 2001 Achiever of the Month award," Howard said.

When Jacqueline applied for assistance at Wayne County's Hamtramck District office in 1999, she had left her job as assistant manager at a beauty supply company to care for her daughter, Jasmine, who had a serious medical condition and was recovering from surgery. Her son, Jonathon, also has a serious medical condition and receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

While caring for children with medical needs qualifies a recipient for a deferment from Work First requirements, Jones was determined to get back into the work force as soon as possible.

"I didn't want to go to FIA, but I knew I had to provide for Jasmine and Jonathon," she said. She wanted her children to believe that with determination and hard work they are capable of achieving anything. And she wants to be an example her children can model.

Even though Jones was deferred from Work First, she continued to focus on finding employment and becoming self-sufficient.

Hamtramck District family independence specialist Tamika Parks, and Felicia Taylor, Project Zero coordinator, helped Jones with her job search by assisting with job counseling, resume writing, dressing for success and they held mock interviews.





Tamika Parks



Felicia Taylor

Jones decided to increase her employability through formal training and, in July 1999, enrolled in classes at Wayne County Community College (WCCC). She currently is working toward an associate's degree in elementary education and plans to graduate in December 2003.

While attending WCCC, Jones initially worked two part time jobs—one as an English tutor and another as a cashier in a bookstore. In December 1999, after being on assistance for only three months, Jones' cash assistance case closed due to earnings. While currently she receives no cash assistance from FIA, she recently applied for day care assistance.

In August 2001, she interviewed with Midwest Careers and was hired as an intake specialist and continues in that position today. Jacqueline plans to become an elementary teacher, but meantime will continue her employment at Midwest Careers. She enjoys her job and is fortunate to be in a great work environment with opportunity for personal and professional growth.

Jones believes the love and support she receives from her children is constant and has encouraged her to succeed and do her best.

"I put my mind to it and concentrated on getting a good job that will help me grow," she said. "I want to do well for my children and grandchildren." Jacqueline also credits her sister Toylise for providing a lot of motivation and emotional support.

"Jacqueline is well on a path that will inspire not only her personal development, but also her children's," said Howard when presenting her award. "She is a wonderful role model and through her example, her children will learn that determination and hard work can lead to success.

■ The FIA's Achiever of the Month award was established in October of 1993 to recognize the contributions and achievements of those who participate in Michigan's landmark reform initiative, *To Strengthen Michigan Families*. Achievers are singled out for recognition because of their extraordinary efforts to achieve independence from public assistance for themselves and their families. Previous recipients and their stories are published at www.mfia.state.mi.us, under the link "Achievers of the Month".



Jacqueline Jones at her ceremony with her mother and boyfriend.



The Bears of Macomb County

FIA, local agencies assist project to help kids and adults alike

By Linda Wilson

**Volunteer Services Coordinator
Macomb County Family Independence
Agency, Clinton Township
Telephone (586) 412-6114**

Small furry things sat all over the Macomb County FIA offices. Some were dressed as firemen, ballerinas, beekeepers, and others were bare-naked. Make that BEAR naked!

Last Nov. 5-9 was the county's first **Bring A Bear To Work Week**. Sponsored by the Volunteer Services Program, the project was designed to collect teddy bears to offer children in the protective services program. This **Bear Hug Project** may become an annual event.



Mt. Clemens District office staff members Bert Lema, Mary Russell and Cindy Quint give their bears one more hug before donating them.

Macomb County's three district offices and central administration site asked staff to bring in new bears that week. District volunteer liaisons Cheryl Seidl and Laura Sierpien, and VJ Vissa helped get the word out.

Bears waiting to be "released" sat with their staff members in individual offices. Some just hung around; others helped by being paperweights. Another group acted as doorstops. Most bears, however, sat in offices providing smiles to staff.

Each of the offices held a "Bear Adoption Day" with refreshments and counseling for any separation anxiety that might occur when staff gave up their bear for adoption. Each staff member who donated a bear received a "certificate of release" that cited the name of the bear as well as the staff donor.

Popular names included Bubba, Lindbearg, Brownie, Beulah, and Bob. Donated bears had to meet two requirements—they had to be new bears and they had to be "cuddly". Staff donated hundreds of bears.

Since Macomb County FIA has Children's Protective Services staff in each of the three district offices, the bears were kept in the office where donated. CPS staffers decide how they want to match the bears with children they are working with in the county. District volunteer liaisons also made "adoption certificates" available to staff to give to the children receiving bears.

Linda O'Keefe, CPS supervisor in the Sterling Heights District office, said: "The generosity of the community and staff in providing the many different bears for the children of Macomb County was overwhelming. We filled an office to overflowing but am happy to report most of the bears have already found homes. What a wonderful project of kindness and giving."

On Dec. 8, Macomb County FIA received about 200 more donated bears from the "Bear Event" held at the Warren YMCA building. The Macomb chapter of the American Dental Hygienists Association co-sponsored the event. Donors included dental hygienists and students, doctors, a hair salon, and the YMCA. A local pastry shop donated refreshments.

Laura Diehl, president of the ADH said: "This is a great project and we are very happy to be involved with the FIA. Everyone loves a bear hug". Donations from this event were distributed to each of the district offices.

Plans are under way for a spring project when bears and bunnies will be gathered to give to senior citizens in the county through the Adult Services program. As difficult as it is to give the stuffed bears and bunnies away, staff know that "hare today gone tomorrow" means a senior will have a fluffy friend to hug.



Warren District staff and their donations (standing left to right): Laura Sierpien, Sandi Chavez, Nancy Opatich, Karen Hattan, Linda Girolamo, Chris Augustun. Kneeling from left are Kathy Schemanski, Nancy Redziniak, Sharon King, Jo Armstrong and Patti Hazen.



Macomb County staff Rosemary Smith, Debbie Cyma, (volunteer) Jean Stevenson, Laura Prior and Bobbie Cocquyt getting ready to enter the adoption center.



Sterling Heights District office staff Sandra Dooley, Ruby Brooks, Tracy Upshaw, Jeanette Schmitt and Denise Schoof await adoption proceedings.

Mecosta County

Effective partnership improves quality of life

Staff and FIA Board changes net quality award for Mecosta County

By Stan Parker, Quality Recognition System Coordinator

FIA Office of Reengineering & Quality Management, Lansing

Telephone (517) 373-7984

BIG RAPIDS – On Dec. 17, Mecosta County Family Independence Agency employees received a \$1,500 Quality Recognition Award and two FIA T.E.A.M awards for their process improvement and innovative customer-focused initiatives.



From left: Stan Parker with Mecosta team members Jim Hauser (FIA Board), Cindy Roak, Nancy Lentz, Beverly Wesche, Marie Whipple, Trudy Koehler and county director Sharon Christensen.

needs, personal care, and quality of life needs. Next, the worker submits a request to the volunteer services coordinator to fill out the quality of life needs request. Examples of services that have been requested include a subscription to a local newspaper, clothes, haircuts and perms and a walking stick.

If the request is approved, an attempt is made to fill the request through traditional community resources. However, if traditional resources are not available, the request is forwarded to the Adult Service Support Fund to be filled. All requests to the fund must be less than \$100. From October 2000 to June 2001, there were 38 requests received. Traditional community resources were only able to cover four of the requests. Without the Adult Service Support Fund most adult service customer needs would have gone unmet.

Since its inception, this new process has increased services to individuals by 66 percent. As a result, a Quality Recognition Award in the amount of \$1,500 was awarded to the team. In lieu of receiving individual financial remuneration, the ASSF team generously donated the entire award amount to the ASSF account.

The team includes Nancy Lentz, volunteer services coordinator; Trudy Koehler and Beverly Wesche, adult service employees; George Hess, social service program manager; Eileen Tucker and Marie Whipple, fiscal staff; Carla Waldron, Karen Yokom, Ron Rodden, Vicki Andres, Valerie Sieffert, Karil Lewis, Carole Dow and Kim Kailing, eligibility specialists; Cindy Roak, administrative support supervisor; Pam Lewis and Trish McHugh, family independence managers.

Also Dec. 17, Mecosta County FIA director Sharon Christensen was presented with two FIA T.E.A.M awards. FIA director Doug Howard presented the staff members with two certificates of recognition for activities meeting the FIA vision and values of customer focus, action oriented and teamwork. The entire FIA staff was recognized for their “Backyard Bargain Bonanza” and “Moms for Moms” activities.

■ For more information on the Adult Services Support Fund, contact Nancy Lentz at (231) 796-4312.

Services to low-income aged and disabled adults have been enhanced by Mecosta County. They redesigning their local office’s life needs assessment process and created the Adult Service Support Fund (ASSF) to service unmet non-emergency needs.

The ASSF improves the quality of life for adult service customers. This initiative is a joint partnership venture with the Mecosta County Social Service Board. Prior to the Adult Service Support Fund initiative, community resources available to low-income aged and disabled adults were limited to basic needs such as food, shelter, utilities, medical, personal care and emergency care.

The new process involves the FIA worker conducting an assessment and developing a service plan to document basic

Saginaw County

Enhanced intake application process improves customer service Saginaw team earns \$1,500 cash award

SAGINAW—Improved processes resulting in better customer service at FIA Saginaw County Family Independence Agency earned recognition and a cash award at a Dec. 11 ceremony.

Stan Parker presented certificates of recognition to the Saginaw team on behalf of the Office of Performance Excellence for enhancing the intake application process. Nathaniel Lake, director of the Michigan Office of Performance Excellence, and FIA director Doug Howard signed the certificates.

The team also received a \$1,500 Quality Recognition System award.

The team members are: Linda Beckman and Elizabeth Fuss, eligibility specialists; John Johnson, program manager; Paulette Osborne, family independence manager; and David Scott, family independence specialist.

The team from Saginaw County FIA enhanced their intake application process by designing a new process that includes a new electronic report using the Microsoft Excel software program. This report has been downloaded on Saginaw FIA's local server using case information from LOA, CIS, and ASSIST. The process allows staff to have immediate access to pertinent case information and reduce the possibility of cases going overdue.

Prior to this initiative the county depended upon reports distributed by Central Office (MH-132, MH-990) to help them identify which cases needed action. However, many times the reports were received after the due dates, and occasionally the reports were routed to the wrong locations or information in the report did not accurately reflect specialists' current case activity. At the time of registration, the "enhanced intake process" involves the registration support specialist in the transfer of information from ASSIST, LOA or CIS to the local server. At completion, the information is forwarded to the assigned specialist. The specialist then has immediate access to the information.

The new process gives managers immediate access to caseload information. In the event of an emergency, managers can redistribute priority work. Managers are able to field questions about case status and quickly and accurately verify the case disposition, all from the desktop. The new process makes a positive difference in timely processing and disposition of intake applications. It is an enhancement to accuracy and an example of Teaming for Excellence. —Stan Parker

■ For more information about the Saginaw enhanced intake process, contact Elizabeth Fuss at (989) 758-1500.

If you are interested in process improvement and want to be recognized for improvements, contact Stan Parker by telephone at (517) 373-7984 or by email at parkers@Michigan.gov



From left: Longino Gonzales, Saginaw County FIA director and Stan Parker with the Saginaw team: David Scott, John Johnson, Paulette Osborne and (seated) Elizabeth Fuss.



Home for the holidays

Hockett family moves into home built by Habitat

By Lisa Perkins

Herald staff writer

December 5, 2001

www.record-eagle.com

■ Sue Schwartz of Grand Traverse County Family Independence Agency contributed to this story.

TRAVERSE CITY—Home for the holidays takes on a whole new meaning for Lana Hockett and her family this year. Thanks to Habitat for Humanity and a collaborative community effort, the Hocketts will spend their holiday season in a new home of their own.

"I've wanted a home of my own for about 13 years," said Hockett at a dedication ceremony Dec. 2. "This just means everything to me." Hockett will share her home with sons Devin, 12, Dustin, 9 and daughter, McKinnah, 2.

"I'm looking forward to our first Christmas here," Devin said. "We've worked hard, I'm glad to be able to move in."

The Hockett's Boyd Street residence is the first Habitat for Humanity house completed in Traverse City. The effort was coordinated through Rotary Camps and Services and sponsored by the **Family Independence Agency** and Freedom Ministries of America in cooperation with the Traverse City Police and Fire Departments.

"We have built 50 homes over the last 14 years, but this is our first home in Traverse City and it was truly a collaborate effort," said Robin Grubbs, executive director of Habitat for Humanity, Grand Traverse Region.

The Grand Traverse County FIA took on the responsibility of project supervisor and soliciting donations. Nearly 50 local businesses and individuals contributed goods and services while several hundred volunteers offered their time and skill. Cindy Crocket, Grand Traverse FIA's Project Zero coordinator, solicited over \$40,000 in donated items for the project. Skip Brown of Freedom Builders, Freedom Ministries was FIA's site supervisor. Bob Porter, director of Grand Traverse FIA, solicited donations and worked with Brown on home building.

Robin Grubbs, director of Habitat for Humanity, brought in crews of area youth church groups to assist. The Grand Traverse County jail inmate work crews also contributed to the project. The Hocketts put in 275 hours of sweat equity on their home alongside neighbors, friends, family and crews from the Traverse City Police and Fire Departments.

■ The Herald is an insert in the Traverse City Record Eagle, published Wednesdays.



Partners in the Traverse City project included Habitat for Humanity director Robin Grubbs and Cindy Crocket of Grand Traverse FIA (left-right above), FIA director Bob Porter and Skip Brown of Freedom Ministries (left-right below). Below: the Hockett's house.



Carrying the torch

Pair of FIA employees participate in Olympic torch processions

Two Family Independence Agency employees took part in Olympic torch carrying processions Jan. 6.

Judi Brown Clarke and Connie Norman, both employees in the FIA Child and Family Services Administration in Lansing, carried the torch as part of relays in Flint and Lansing, respectively. Brown Clarke is a staff member with the Community Supportive Services unit and Norman is in the Foster Care Policy unit, where she works on foster home development. Both work in Lansing's Grand Tower.



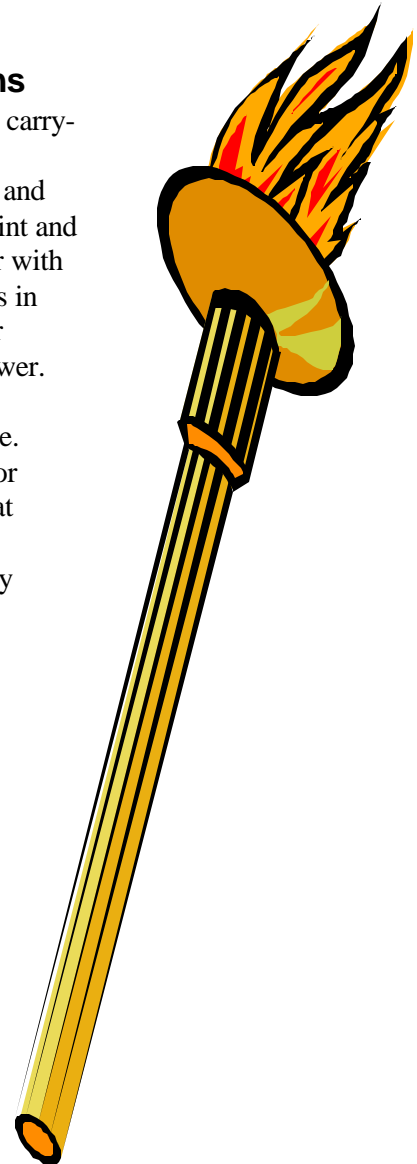
Judi Brown Clarke

Brown Clarke is a former Olympian and member of the Lansing Olympic Torch Run Committee. As a member of the committee, she was responsible for setting up the Lansing run at the state Capitol early that Sunday morning, then going to Flint to carry out her responsibilities there as part of the Flint-to-Detroit relay team.

"I was nominated (as a torch carrier)," she said. "Each of us carries the torch about one-eighth mile or about 200 yards. You can actually see the person in front of you."

Norman applied for participation in the torch relay and was one of a group of Lansing-area residents participating in the Capitol area event.

As a member of the U. S. Olympic team in 1984, Brown Clarke ran the 400 meter hurdles under the name Judi Brown. In 1987 she set an American record with a time of 54.23 seconds in the 400 hurdles and, in 1983, she was the NCAA 400-meter hurdles champion while attending Michigan State University.



Connie Norman

FIA people

Larry Miesner retired as director of FIA Bureau of Juvenile Justice Jan. 4 to become a consultant with the National Juvenile Detention Association. FIA Child and Family Services Administration director Jim Beougher said the agency would begin a search for a new director.

"In the interim, I am pleased to announce that Marlys Schutjer will step into the director's role," Beougher said. "I am confident she will provide for a smooth transition period while a national search occurs." Schutjer is manager of outstate services in the bureau."

Miesner has more than 30 years' experience in juvenile justice systems here and in Missouri and is a former deputy director with Genesee County Family Independence Agency.



Larry Miesner



Marlys Schutjer

Team Michigan earns national award

Group wins Department of Energy award for weatherization efforts

By Susan Alderman-Straubel

FIA Office of Financial Assistance Programs, Lansing

Telephone (517) 335-6181

Team Michigan—a group of weatherization directors from Community Action Agencies around the state—and an FIA employee received a national award in November.

Team Michigan consists of eight local Weatherization directors. The group and Mike Kessler from the Family Independence Agency received the U.S. Department of Energy's National Weatherization

Assistance Program Award at the 2001 National Weatherization Training conference Nov. 29 in Atlanta.

Team Michigan won the award in recognition of their innovations in conducting "demonstration houses".

In a demonstration house project, local weatherization agencies show local, state, and federal officials how to install weatherization measures on low-income homes.

The Team Michigan concept emphasizes a team approach and a standardized display package.

Gail McKinley, U. S. Department of Energy's director of Office of Building Technology Assistance, presented the award to Mike Kessler and Cheryl McKinney of the Muskegon-Oceana



Team Michigan: Back row from left: Dana Tomaski, Cheryl McKinney, Dave Moran, Mike Kessler and Marcia Ferris. Front from left: Dale Congdon, Duane Griffus and Payson Tilden. Thom Knoll is not pictured.

Community Action Against Poverty at the awards luncheon. Ten awards were given out, with nine going to individuals who have a long history in the weatherization field.

Team Michigan was formed less than two years ago. This is the first time a team award was presented, and the first time Michigan has received an award.

Team Michigan includes: Dave Moran, Macomb County Community Services Agency; Payson Tilden, Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency; Dana Tomaski, Mid Michigan Community Action Agency, Inc.; Marcia Ferris, Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency; Duane Griffus, Capital Area Community Services, Inc.; Cheryl McKinney, Muskegon-Oceana Community Action Against Poverty, Inc.; Thom Knoll, Kalamazoo County Human Services Department Human Development Bureau; Dale Congdon, Allegan County Resource Development Committee, Inc.; and Mike Kessler, Family Independence Agency.

The FIA provides weatherization funds through the U. S. Department of Energy Weatherization Assistance Program. It is administered by local agencies. Services help qualifying families make energy efficiency improvements to their homes. In program year 2000-01, more than 3,000 Michigan households received assistance.

LEIN: law enforcement information network

FIA collaboration with network will improve community knowledge

Pilot under way, statewide rollout expected to begin Feb. 1

Information: John Blanchard

Telephone (517) 373-6760

■ Kristen Dixon, Anna Gallagher, James Turner, Richard O'Herron and John Blanchard teamed on this article.

The Family Independence Agency is collaborating with law enforcement agencies on ways to make home visits safer and more predictable for its employees. One important development is the agency's link to the Law Enforcement Information Management System—known as LEIN and pronounced lean.

The FIA has started the process of making LEIN access available statewide to child welfare staff. Following revision of state law and an agreement with the Criminal Justice Information Systems (CJIS) Policy Council, the statewide implementation started with Macomb County in December.

When fully implemented, LEIN information available to child welfare staff will include Michigan criminal conviction, arrest and charge history, personal protection orders, parole violations, outstanding warrants, concealed weapons permits and gun permits. While LEIN will be very helpful in decision-making, everyone must remain vigilant and rely on their experience along with LEIN information to determine the level of risk to themselves or to a child in the home.

The FIA is one of very few non-law enforcement agencies to be given LEIN access. Because of our non-law enforcement status, Michigan State Police in conjunction with CJIS Policy Council developed operating guidelines outlining access, use and disclosure of LEIN information.

Recent news stories have detailed abuses of LEIN information by certain law enforcement personnel, where it was alleged LEIN information was accessed, used or disseminated for personal reasons. These activities must not occur in the FIA. Operating procedures are clearly identified within FIA policy as required by both Michigan State Police and CJIS Policy Council.

Because LEIN provides access to private information, there is a high level of security and confidentiality surrounding LEIN data. Individual transactions as well as overall policies and procedures are subject to audit and oversight by Michigan State Police.

The policy and procedures for using LEIN have been written and will be released to FIA offices as they near the schedule for LEIN implementation.

A LEIN pilot project commenced Dec. 3 in Macomb County. The pilot is proceeding very well. Rollout is under way using a phased approach that began Feb. 1. Statewide rollout is expected to be complete by July 2002.

Training and policy releases will be scheduled in conjunction with the statewide rollout. Training will be held for both the staff that will be requesting and interpreting LEIN information (users) and for staff that will be operating the LEIN system (operators). Training for both groups is about three hours long and will be held at FIA Training Centers located statewide.

Both Michigan State Police and the FBI require that fingerprints are collected and background checks are conducted on all LEIN operators. The FIA's LEIN Project Team will be working with each county's LEIN coordinator to schedule training that will occur one to two months prior to each county's LEIN implementation.

A web site is planned that will soon provide LEIN updates, training material, and a "frequently asked questions" section. The appropriate use of information from this source will greatly assist the FIA to carry out our duties related to child welfare.

LEIN is a statewide computer system that contains information gathered from various law enforcement agencies throughout Michigan. It is another way for FIA juvenile justice, adoption, foster care and children's protective services staff to gain knowledge about those living in a home they may be required to visit, or a home where a child may be placed.



Building awareness in Washtenaw County

FIA booth at local festival helps spread the word about foster parenting and helps ongoing effort to recruit new foster parents

By Leah Higgins, Foster Care Recruitment
Washtenaw County Family Independence Agency
Telephone (734) 481-8408

YPSILANTI—Recruiting foster parents and building community awareness are the two main goals of the Washtenaw County Family Independence Agency's booth at the Ypsilanti Heritage Festival.

The Ypsilanti Heritage Festival is an annual event held each summer to celebrate the city and its history. Like many city festivals, vendors representing businesses and agencies far and wide come to sell their products. The FIA was there to promote foster parenting and recruit prospective parents in both 2000 and 2001.

Here are some typical scenes at our booth:

- A passer-by notices the sign, points and says something to the person next to him, stops to get information about fostering, something he has been thinking about.
- Youngsters stops by to get a cold drink and one mentions he might still be in the MARE (Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange) book (a photo listing of kids around Michigan available for adoption).
- Foster parents stop by with the children they have adopted – proudly displaying how much they have grown and changed over the years.
- A woman stops by with questions about how to search for her brother, lost to her after they were adopted separately.

These are a few stories of visitors to the Washtenaw County information booth at the Ypsilanti Heritage Festival over the past two years. Children's services staff, as well as staff from all FIA program areas, helped manage the booth during the Heritage Festival. Foster parents also helped out each year. The

continues next page

Caught caring

Shiawassee County FIA Santa's elves create Festival of Gifts

Excerpts from article by Jackie Leone, The Argus-Press, Owosso

OWOSSO—A lot of Shiawassee County FIA employees worked very hard this holiday season to stock the shelves of the Festival of Gifts shopping mall at their office in Owosso.

This mall, however, wasn't open to everyone. It was established purely to give children of Shiawassee County families who receive any type of services from FIA the opportunity to pick out a holiday gift for each of their parents. And, most definitely, the prices of these gifts were affordable. They were all free to the children.

According to Festival of Gifts coordinator Kelly Walters, a family independence specialist, the gifts came from the staff of Shiawassee FIA. Even though participation was voluntary, everyone who works at the office either donated gifts or wrapping supplies or refreshments. The response was agency-wide. Plus, several fundraisers were held to purchase additional gifts and supplies. Invitation fliers were drawn up and mailed to 250 families, and there were enough gifts for all of them.

The idea for the festival originated with Dawn Rodriguez who began coordinating the event shortly after the 2000 holiday season. When Dawn transferred to Genesee FIA, Kelly Walters took over for her. A committee that included Laverne Duncan, Lyvette Manns, Marilyn Mose, Cathy Paradise, Lynne Patterson, Janet Shuster and Kristine Soderberg assisted her.

Volunteers brought the children in small groups to the Festival of Gifts shopping mall, where they were given an opportunity to browse and make their choices. Each child was given a "goodie bag" containing small gifts such as pencils and erasers which were used to carry out their selections. The children then had the option of wrapping their own presents or taking them to volunteers who wrapped them for them. While the children made their selections, coffee and cookies were available for the parents while they watched a video. And as everyone knows how exhausting shopping can be, before returning to the lobby, the shoppers had an opportunity to partake of punch and cookies before returning to their parents with their treasures.

■ For more information contact Kelly Walters by telephone (989) 725-3256 or email waltersk@michigan.gov



Kelly Walters

Building awareness in Washtenaw County

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Whether in a city park, on the streets of Ypsilanti or on the back of Margie Yeager's t-shirt, the message is the same: foster parenting is great for everyone. *Opposite page:* Nancy Hill at the 2000 Ypsilanti Heritage Festival.

booth has allowed the opportunity for community awareness of foster care and the children's need for stable families. It has also allowed us to raise awareness within the agency about the foster care program. One family independence specialist who volunteered at the booth had made contact with Wayne County FIA (her county of residence) to become a foster parent.

It was inspiring to see the complete support of the agency for this endeavor. Everyone who volunteered was given a foster parenting souvenir for his or her trouble, with our thanks. Although we may or may not see direct results from the information booth, we know we are now more visible in the community, we have personalized the agency for many people, and we have allowed families to take at least the first step in considering foster parenting. The booth was a wonderful opportunity to present the agency to the community while at the same time building community within the agency.

Spirituality & community success for residents

SAMMY Project connects spirituality with community success for W.J. Maxey Boys Training School

Co-authored by Calvin Holt, Mary Hedgepeth and Chaplain Kamuyu, Ph.D.

W.J. Maxey Boys Training School, Whitmore Lake

Telephone (734) 449-4422, ext. 2191

WHITMORE LAKE – During May 1999, Chaplain Kamuyu-wa-Kang’ethe, Ph.D. founded the SAMMY Project at the Lakeside Chapel on the campus of the W.J. Maxey Boys Training School. SAMMY is an acronym for “spiritual adoption ministry for Maxey youth”. The project was initiated in an effort to support youth in building integrity, character and respect.

SAMMY is a spiritually-based program serving residents from all religious faiths and backgrounds. Youths participating in the project have an interest in spirituality and enrichment programs. Karla Hampton, SAMMY Project coordinator, gauges a youth’s interest through his involvement in the various religious and spiritual activities offered on campus. Currently, there are nearly 30 spiritual enrichment programs that youth may choose from.

Residents that elect to join the project participate in an intensive three-month class on spirituality. Focus of each weekly class is to further develop each participant’s sense of spirituality while helping connect his belief system to his choice of behaviors.

Participation is voluntary and no resident is coerced or otherwise encouraged toward spirituality or religious membership or involvement.



SAMMY project coordinator Karla Hampton and Maxey campus chaplain Kamuyu-wa-Kang’ethe Photo: Dave Brenner

Seven program components

The SAMMY Project is comprised of seven components designed to aid youth, families and community in the project’s mission:

- Spiritual support network – provides direct spiritual support of released youth by volunteer houses of worship.
- Clergy conferences-training – helps clergy members expand their ministry to spiritually wounded adolescents.
- Prayer partners – supplies volunteers an opportunity to come together and pray for the youth at the training school. Individual youth request to be added to the prayer list.
- Community Outreach Ministries – supports youth and families through visits, prayer, and edification by clergy and SAMMY Team members.
- SAMMY classes – train youth to be tomorrow’s leaders and protectors of the community.
- Speakers’ bureau – educates at-risk school children through presentations made by released youth and community volunteers.
- SAMMY Trumpet – promotes and connects SAMMY youth and volunteers via newsletter format.

Here is a brief look at some project participants. While their names have been changed to protect their confidentiality, their stories are true and factual.

SAMMY participant successful in the community

“Charles” is a recent graduate of the SAMMY Project that brought a history of drug sales and assaultive behavior with him to his treatment program at the W.J. Maxey Boys Training School. He said his mother was a good provider, but he wanted more material possessions than she could provide. He acknowledged he had lost control of his behavior.

After a year at the training school, Charles began participating in the SAMMY Project. He attributes the SAMMY Project staff with helping him in his spiritual growth and renewal. The training school served as a wake up call to him. Charles credits God for his ultimate decision to lead a crime-free lifestyle and values the maintenance of his spirituality.

Charles left the training school nearly three years ago, at the age of 18 and has been discharged from state supervision. He is still actively involved as a speaker in the SAMMY Speakers’ Bureau, looking for opportunities to speak with at-risk youth and urge them to avoid criminal behavior.

A current SAMMY Project member

“Marvin” is a current participant in the SAMMY Project. He was sent to W.J. Maxey Boys Training School after being involved in a criminal sexual conduct offense. He credits the program with expanding his horizons.

Marvin suggested that expansion of his spiritual life has helped him in treatment through the lowering of his defenses, increasing his level of empathy and facilitating his acceptance of personal responsibility. He acknowledges he would like to improve on his ability to maintain a positive attitude and to continue to work towards his spiritual growth.

His social worker, Annette Henderson, said he is modest in recognizing his growth. She credits the SAMMY Project with making a significant difference in his progress.

Helping half a hundred

Since its inception, the SAMMY Project has assisted approximately 50 youth with their transition back to the community. If you or someone you know would like to be part of the program, you can help by doing any of these things:

- Volunteering as a guest speaker for a SAMMY youth class.
- Becoming a “birthday parent” and helping residents celebrate their birthdays.
- Volunteering for a prayer group, religious study group or other activity.
- Providing a donation of cash, gift certificates, coupons or vouchers to assist youth in their transition to independent living within the community.

For more information, please contact: Chaplain Kamuyu, Ph.D. at (734) 449-4422, ext. 2191; Karla Hampton, M.S.W., project coordinator, at (734) 449-3046; or Jennifer Halfacer, secretary, at (734) 449-4422, ext. 2190.

■ **The W. J. Maxey Boys Training School is a residential juvenile justice facility administered by the FIA. It serves male youths adjudicated by the courts and has a residential capacity of 320.**

More FIA people

In the past year, many state and local officials have worked with the federal government on reauthorization of the federal welfare reform act and TANF block grant program. This delegation of Michigan representatives offered input at the Chicago session of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' "national listening tour" in November.



From left: Ron Jimmerson of Cascade Engineering in Grand Rapids, a welfare-to-work employer; Joyce Bosscher, a family independence specialist with Kent County FIA; Deidre Thomas from Kent County; Myron Freeman, Michigan Senate Fiscal Agency; state Rep. Doug Hart from Rockford; FIA director Doug Howard; and Lynda Crandall, director of FIA Family Independence Services Administration.

Reauthorizing the federal welfare reform act will be taken up by the U.S. Congress this year.

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